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AF/W FOR BACHMAN & HEFLIN; AF/FO FOR THOMAS-GREENFIELD; PRM  
FOR GREENE; PARIS FOR AFRICA WATCHER

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TAGS: [PBTS](#) [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [PREF](#) [PREL](#) [PTER](#) [SMIG](#) [SOCI](#)

SUBJECT: NIGER: GOVERNMENT RESCINDS ORDER TO EXPEL NOMADIC  
ARABS

REF: A. NIAMEY 1190

[1](#)B. NIAMEY 904

[1](#)1. The Government of Niger (GON) Council of Ministers, under the direction of GON President Mamadou Tandja, held a special session on Friday, October 27, to review an October 24 decision (reported reftel) that called for the expulsion of Mahamid Arabs from the Diffa region (eastern Niger bordering Chad). GON spokesperson, Ben Omar, announced (10/27) that the matter is now in the hands of a commission tasked to find a solution that provides for a peaceful coexistence between the Mahamids and other ethnic groups in the Diffa region.

[1](#)2. The GON spokesperson announced and local media reported the rescission of the order to expel an undetermined number of Mahamids (ranging from several to tens of thousands) out of Diffa to neighboring countries (most notably Chad). The Government newspaper, "Le Sahel", reported that the Council of Ministers decided to rescind the order after studying the socioeconomic implications of such a move. Further the Council decided to establish a commission to examine the situation of the Mahamids and tasked the commission to find, within the next 30 days, alternatives conducive to maintaining peace between the Mahamids and other ethnic groups in the Diffa region. The four GON Ministers assigned to the commission are: 1) Water, Environment and Animal Resources, 2) Interior and Decentralization, 3) Community Development and Territorial Management, and 4) Communication.

[1](#)3. The Council of Ministers submitted to the Commission a recommendation that the Mahamids move herds to pastures in neighboring regions, such as Zinder and Agadez, to alleviate some of the pressure on Diffa. The Council concluded its special session with a declaration reaffirming that Niger is a peaceful, stable nation and a call for Nigeriens to ensure that the nation's "legendary hospitable image" is not tarnished.

[1](#)4. During the course of the weekend, there were reports of peaceful protests in Diffa against the GON's repeal of its earlier decision to expel the Mahamids. It was also reported that members of ethnic groups (Fulani, Toubou and Kanuri) originally from Diffa, but now resident in Niamey, also protested the GON's rescission of the expulsion order. Local media reported that the GON responded to the protests by recognizing the protesters freedom of expression and, concurrently, calling for restraint as the GON seeks a peaceful solution to the dispute.

[1](#)5. No new developments have been reported since the weekend's peaceful protests; all appears calm.

